SD11
.A574
No.249

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

North Central
Research Station

General Technical
Report NC-249

Special Places in the Lake Calumet Area

Herbert W. Schroeder

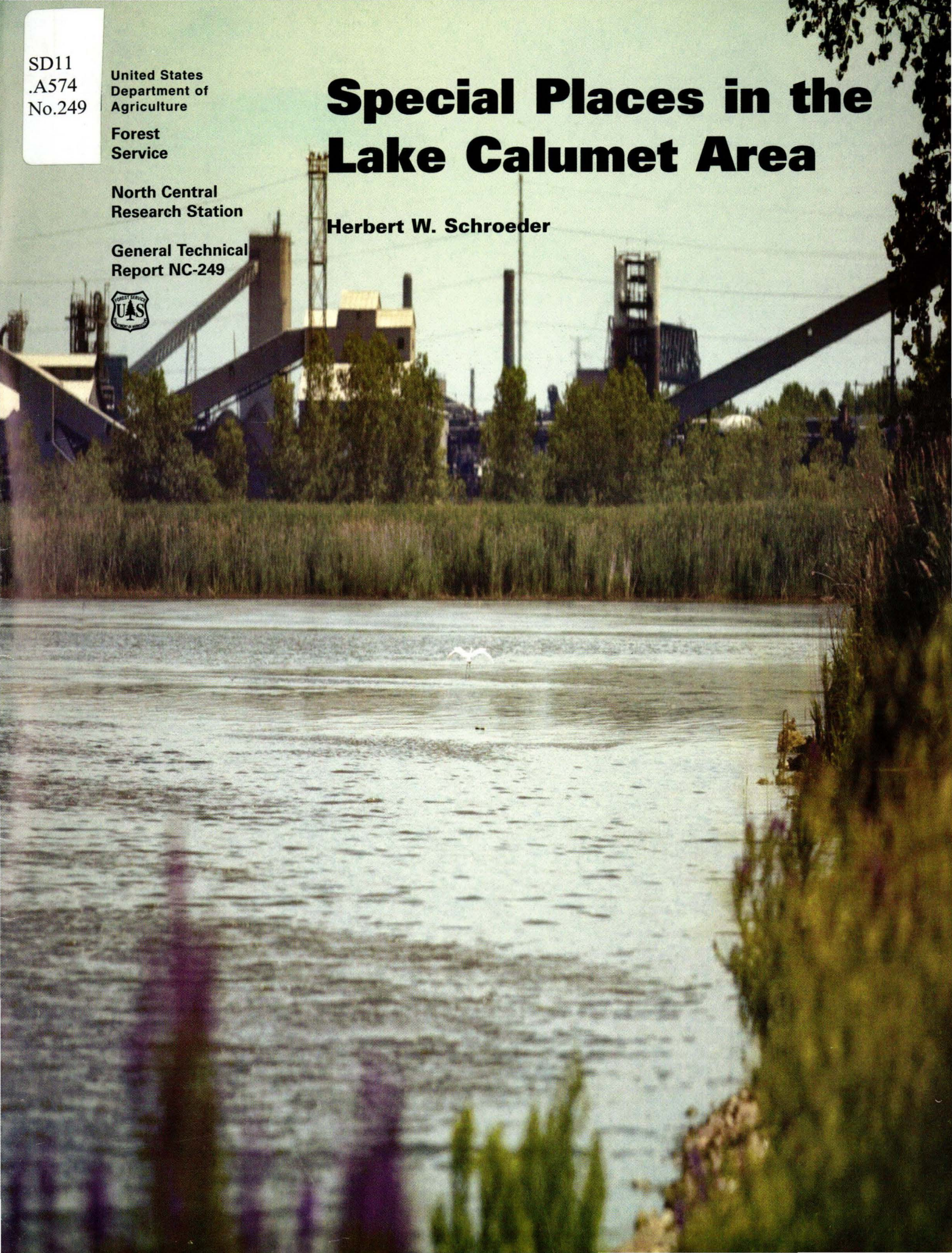


TABLE OF CONTENTS

METHODS 1

RESPONDENTS 2

SPECIAL PLACE DESCRIPTIONS 2

The Value of Special Places 4

Natural Features and Environments 5

Human and Built Features 7

Memories of the Past, Hopes for the Future 10

DISCUSSION 11

CONCLUSIONS 13

LITERATURE CITED 13

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 13

APPENDIX 14

North Central Research Station
U.S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service
1992 Folwell Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108
2004
www.ncrs.fs.fed.us

SPECIAL PLACES IN THE LAKE CALUMET AREA

Herbert W. Schroeder is a Research Social Scientist with the USDA Forest Service, North Central Research Station, Evanston, Illinois.

The experiences that people have in natural environments can be an important part of their lives. When people have highly valued aesthetic and emotional experiences in specific places or types of settings, these places and settings take on particular importance for them and become "special places." As natural areas become increasingly vulnerable to development and urban sprawl, it is important for planners and managers to recognize the importance of special natural places and to consider how such places are affected by land management and development policies.

The research study reported here is the most recent in a series of surveys I have carried out to learn about the feelings and meanings that people attach to special places in natural environments (Schroeder 2002). In earlier studies, I looked at special places in the Morton Arboretum west of Chicago (Schroeder 1991), in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (Schroeder 1996), and in northern Wisconsin (Schroeder 1998). This survey report focuses on the Lake Calumet area, which includes the southeast side of Chicago as well as adjacent communities in northeastern Illinois and northwestern Indiana. The Lake Calumet area contains a diverse mixture of industrial development, residential communities, and natural features such as lakes, wetlands, streams, prairies, and forests. It is much more urbanized than any of the other locations of my special places surveys. The purpose of this study was to provide information for multi-agency planning efforts that are seeking to revitalize both the economy and the ecology of the Lake Calumet region.

METHODS

During the fall, winter, and spring of 2000-2001, announcements of the Lake Calumet Special Places Survey were distributed to numerous groups and individuals in the Calumet area. Announcements were passed out at public meetings, given to visitors at local nature centers, printed in a local newspaper, and sent by regular and electronic mail to people belonging to groups that have an interest in the Lake Calumet area. People who responded to the announcement and expressed an interest in participating were sent a survey and instructions for writing their responses.

The survey asked them to identify outdoor places that they thought were special within the Lake Calumet area and to explain the thoughts, feelings, and memories that they associated with these places. The survey also asked for some background information about the participants, including where their primary residence is, whether they live in or regularly visit the Lake Calumet area, how old they are, how old they were when they first came to the Calumet area, what activities they most enjoy doing there, and whether they have lived most of their life in urban, suburban, small town, or rural areas. At the end of the survey, a space was provided for people to write in general comments about the Calumet area or about the survey. A stamped, preaddressed envelope was provided for returning the surveys. Copies of the survey announcement, instructions, and response forms are included in the appendix to this report.

I read carefully through all the survey responses that were mailed back to me, outlining the features and themes that appeared most often across people's descriptions of their special places. The outline included four main divisions: (1) specific, named locations mentioned in people's descriptions of special places; (2) environmental features and characteristics of

RMRS Library
USDA Forest Service
240 W Prospect Rd
Fort Collins CO 80526
MAR 8 2005

special places; (3) activities or behaviors that people reported engaging in or observing at their special places; and (4) subjective qualities, feelings, meanings, and experiences associated with special places. More details on the methods I use for identifying special places themes can be found in Schroeder (1996).

Because the group of respondents who wrote place descriptions was self-selected and not random, their responses cannot be generalized to draw conclusions about how the general public views the Calumet area. Instead, their responses give an indication of the types of places, features, and experiences that are important to those people who care enough about places within the Calumet area to want to respond to a survey of this kind.

RESPONDENTS

Twenty-four people returned completed surveys, providing a total of 76 individual place descriptions plus an assortment of other comments and observations about the Lake Calumet area. The respondents ranged in age from 25 to 79 years. Eleven had their primary residence in the Lake Calumet area, and another nine visited there regularly. Five of the non-Calumet residents lived in the city of Chicago and five in the suburbs. Four of the non-residents were former residents of the Calumet area; one of these lived in southern Illinois, and one in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

The residents and former residents had lived in the Lake Calumet area from 23 to 79 years. The average length of residence was 40 years. The respondents, including residents, former residents, and visitors, had first come to the Lake Calumet area from 1 to 75 years ago. The average number of years since first coming to the Lake Calumet area was 40.

Twenty of the respondents belonged to organizations that had some interest or involvement in planning for the Lake Calumet area. The most common of these were the Calumet Ecological Park Association (eight respondents) and the Audubon Society (six respondents). Other organizations that respondents belonged to included the Calumet Heritage Partnership, Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership, and various other environmental, recreation, and interest groups.

When asked about what kind of community they had lived most of their lives in, most of the respondents indicated either big cities or suburbs, or both. Two had lived mostly in small towns and one in rural areas.

SPECIAL PLACE DESCRIPTIONS

A total of 76 place descriptions were written, ranging in length from 12 to just over 300 words. The number of places described by each respondent ranged from 1 to 6.

Table 1.—*Number of respondents mentioning locations of special places*

Place location	Number of respondents (N=24)
Neighborhoods north and west	4
Lake Michigan Shore area	4
Migrant Bird Trap	3
Lake Calumet area	14
Lake Calumet	9
Dead Stick Pond	4
Big Marsh	3
Indian Ridge Marsh	3
Calumet River area	11
Calumet River	4
Hegewisch Marsh	3
Beaubien Woods (Parsons)	4
Wolf Lake area	14
Wolf Lake	12
Eggers Woods	4
Powderhorn area	8
South Suburban area	7
Sand Ridge area	4
Thornton area	4

A variety of specific, named locations were mentioned in descriptions of special places. Table 1 lists some of the most commonly mentioned locations, sorted into several subareas of the Lake Calumet region. These subareas are shown in the map in figure 1. The locations mentioned most often as special places were in the Lake Calumet, Wolf Lake, and Calumet River areas, followed by the Powderhorn Lake area and the suburbs south of Lake Calumet. Several of the respondents wrote about places that were outside of the area shown in the map given them with the survey to show the extent of the Calumet area. These included the Forest Preserves and nature center in the Sand Ridge and Thorn Creek areas.

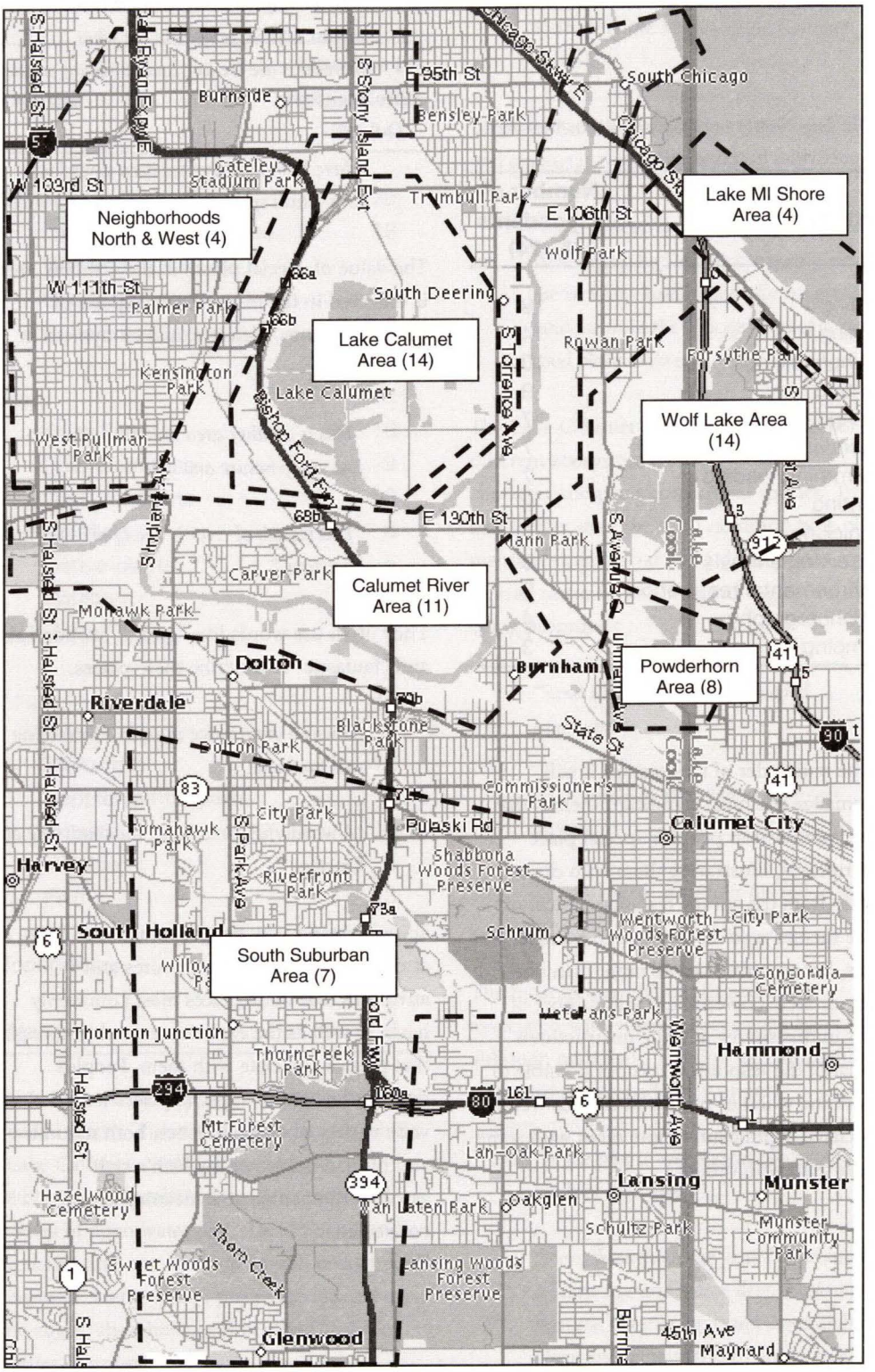


Figure 1.—*Locations of Places Named in Special Place Descriptions. Numbers in parentheses show how many respondents mentioned locations within each subarea.*

Participants mentioned a variety of activities that they have done, would enjoy doing, or have observed other people doing in the Lake Calumet area. Some of the more frequently mentioned activities are listed in table 2. Birding, fishing, hiking/walking, and boating were the activities most often mentioned in connection with places in the Lake Calumet area.

Table 2.—*Number of respondents mentioning activities in special places*

Activity	Number of respondents (N=24)
Birding	18
Fishing	14
Hiking/walking	10
Boating	9
Biking	7
Observing plants	7
Swimming/wading	7
Hunting	6
Picnicking	6
Observing animals	5
Environmental restoration	5
Art/photography	4
Camping	3

In the remainder of this section, I will summarize the most significant themes that were expressed in people's special place descriptions, illustrating them with direct quotes from the survey responses. Most of these themes were not unique to a single place, but occurred across more than one place or area. (Given the small number of cases in this survey and the unstructured format of the responses, it is not possible to determine whether particular themes were associated significantly more often with some places than with others.)

The Value of Special Places

The special places that people wrote about are an important part of their lives. Some of the respondents use their places frequently and have been coming to them for a long time.

> *"I frequently visit this area particularly in August and September to see what shorebirds are feeding and/or resting in the pond."*

> *"Have been enjoying the area since I was born. Have spent many hours there."*

The value of special places in the Calumet area is reflected in the respondents' reports of positive feelings, pleasure, and enjoyment in these places.

> *"This is another area that allows you to just enjoy nature and life."*

> *"This stretch of river is one of my life's little pleasures."*

They often use words like "great," "wonderful," and "fantastic" to describe these places.

> *"It was a great place to go to. The birding was fantastic!"*

> *"A wonderful preserve on the south side of Chicago."*

To understand why people value these areas, I attempted to identify the features and attributes that these places most commonly have, as well as the experiences and meanings that people associate with them. People's descriptions of their special places included a wide variety of characteristics, both natural and human-made, with which a rich assortment of subjective meanings are connected.

Natural Features and Environments

The types of natural features most often mentioned in special place descriptions in the Calumet area are listed in table 3.

Table 3.—*Number of respondents mentioning natural features of special places*

Feature	Number of respondents (N=24)
Water features	20
Open water (lake, etc.)	19
Wetland	13
Shoreline/beach	9
River/creek/channel	6
Flora	17
Trees/forests	16
Prairie/savanna	9
Wetland plants	8
Wildflowers	5
Native plants	5
Weeds	5
Grass	4
Fauna	21
Birds	19
Mammals	12
Reptiles/amphibians	7
Insects	5
Wildlife	5
Fish	3
Topography	8
Weather	6

Water features are a prominent part of people's special places. These include the major lakes (Lake Calumet, Wolf Lake, and Lake Michigan); a number of smaller ponds and bodies of open water (e.g., Dead Stick Pond); wetlands and marshes; and rivers, creeks, and channels. Many special places are located on the edges, shorelines, and beaches of these bodies of water.

> *"Wolf Lake shores. In the summer, the breeze off the lake feels good."*

> *"A small path leading down into a basin - It's a backwater dammed by beavers in the past."*

> *"Snug Harbor. A tiny hidden harbor on the S. Shore of the Mighty Little Calumet [River]."*

Topographic features such as ridges and dunes add character to the landscape.

> *"I like to observe the Blue Island Ridge standing up high above the river plain to the west. It's hard to actually see geological land forms in the Chicago area, but this is a good place to do so."*

The Lake Calumet area contains a number of different ecosystem types, with their characteristic plant and animal species. Trees and forests were the most common type of flora mentioned in special place descriptions, with prairie, savanna, and wetland vegetation also being prominent.

> *"Sand Ridge is a heavily wooded sanctuary."*

> *"A beautiful sand savanna with rare plants."*

> *"A vast marsh of cattails too tall to see over."*

The most frequently mentioned fauna associated with special places were birds, although mammals, reptiles, and amphibians were also mentioned fairly often.

> *"In the past it was a great place to find all kinds of land birds."*

> *"Now, throughout the year, I sit immobile on a fallen tree and watch deer, muskrats and beavers. Once an opossum came ambling along and almost stepped on my foot."*

"This was the first place where I encountered wild amphibians and reptiles."

The diversity of the flora and fauna in the Lake Calumet area, as well as the rarity of some of the species found here, makes these places special for many people.

"I know of no other location in Illinois that has this variety of birds in one place."

"It encompasses a little bit of everything, great diversity."

"I have seen blooming plants there that I have never seen anywhere else."

The uniqueness of these places, the scarceness of similar areas in this region, and the lack of substitutes for the opportunities they provide all add to their value as special places.

"This type of habitat is almost extinct so it is a unique and extremely valuable place."

"This area is very important to me in that it is one of only two places here in the area to see yellow-headed blackbirds."

The natural qualities of these places stand out all the more because of their contrast to the heavily urbanized areas around them.

"A small patch of beauty in the predominantly industrial area."

"Peaceful haven in the center of a busy shopping area."

"It is a blue gem within this 'rustbelt'."

People appreciate the opportunities these places provide for being in contact with nature and experiencing natural settings and processes.

"Lovely paths to walk and enjoy nature to its fullest."

"It keeps me connected on a daily basis to the rhythms of nature and the changing seasons."

"There are so many beautiful nature preserves and lands to explore, and I have. They all have natural beauty that fills me with joy, just to behold it."

Some people see their special places as wilderness areas, where they can experience the land as it was in the distant past.

"I can get here in 20 minutes from my suburban home, and here I am, in Chicago, in wilderness."

"It was a wild, natural place left over from ages ago."

In their special places, people experience beauty.

"A place to go and walk and just drink in the beauty of plants, birds, and animals that reside there."

"It's almost primordial in its beauty, if you like swamps. ... This beautiful spot restores my soul and makes me glad to be alive."

They find quiet, peace, and serenity.

"Fishing is relaxing even if you're not catching anything. The sun is nice and the lake is calming."

"Cool and restful in the summer, spring, and fall."

"It's like going into southern Illinois. Peaceful, quiet, minimum human impact."

People appreciate that these places are nearby and easy to get to.

"I consider myself fortunate to have such a place in our own backyard."

"Just a short walk from the projects, the kids get to explore and discover nature."

Even though they are not physically distant from built-up urban landscapes, these places can give people the feeling of being far away from their usual daily environments.

"Although only a 7 minute drive from my home, it seems far removed from my daily surroundings."

"It is large enough to immerse yourself in, and feel that you are miles away from civilization."

They are places of solitude, where people can escape and find refuge from the pressures of urban living.

"Here is eerie solitude, a hidden niche of the bustling industrial metropolis, a respite from the rushing world."

"With civilization creeping in from all sides, it's good to have a place to go, just to get away."

Going to these places gives people an opportunity to reflect on their lives and their values.

"It's a tiny, private undiscovered place where I can go all by myself to chill out and get reconnected to that which is important in my life."

"A way of clearing your mind and enjoy the simple things in life that so many people overlook."

"Keeping my sanity and values intact."

Sometimes people feel excitement while in their special place, especially when they encounter something new or unexpected.

"Dead Stick [Pond] always has the potential for surprises and great excitement."

"There are always unexpected occurrences there, which are hard to come by in my proscribed life."

"Every time I go there I see or find something new and wonderful."

At times, these special places may even evoke a sense of magic or awe.

"Home to many oaks, sassafras, elms and more, resident birds abound in Spring, the frogs sing all through the night - a magic place."

"It's a magic place to take my students."

"The people who go there treat the site with awe and respect."

Human and Built Features

While the Lake Calumet area provides people with very significant benefits from its natural settings, it also presents them with many signs of human presence and development. Industrial, commercial, and residential features often form a backdrop or surrounding context for the natural areas of Lake Calumet, and these features appeared quite often in people's descriptions of special places.

The human features most often mentioned are listed in table 4. Many of them reflect the heavily developed, industrial character of the Calumet area, with its factories, railroads, streets, bridges, and landfills. These human-made features, which are located close to and are visible from many of the special places, often have a negative impact on people's experience.

Table 4.—*Number of respondents mentioning human and built features of special places*

Feature	Number of respondents (N=24)
Industry	14
Residential areas	9
Commercial development	4
Transportation	15
Roads/bridges	11
Railroads	8
Ships/locks	5
Parking areas	4
Waste/pollution	14
Dumps/landfills	9
Air pollution	3
Water pollution/sewage	6
Trash/litter	3
Recreation facilities	9
Paths/trails	6
Nature center	4
Sports clubs	3
People	20
Friends/family	13
Tour groups	9
Visitors	8
Residents	7
Historic features/artifacts	4

Pollution, especially of the water, was noted by some of the respondents.

> *"111th St. ... ended at a stinking cat tail swamp, a large sewer laden with you know what regurgitating into that vast area called the lake."*

> *"Shorelines with rusting tank farms leaking caustic chemicals into dead waters."*

Air pollution and smells from factories and landfills are also noticeable.

> *"But I always close my windows and put on the recirculate air for the car because of the strong (poisonous?) smell from the factory near the toll booths."*

> *"If the wind happened to be from the north, yuk - the smell from the city dump! From the south west, double yuk - [a nearby paint factory]."*

> *"Also, unfortunately, there is a large, active garbage dump mountain directly across the highway from it, which often stinks."*

Sometimes these unpleasant features are tolerated or downplayed in people's descriptions. People are aware of these features, but their attention is mainly on the outstanding natural resources that are there to be appreciated.

> *"Even with the stink from the dumps, and the associated flies, it was a great place to go to."*

> *"Windy, cool, sandy, refreshing even though on the Indiana side there is frequently a smell generated by the close-by [starch processing plant]."*

People are concerned over the impact of pollution on the natural environment.

> *"In the past the mills and chemical companies didn't do the creek any good. In the future my fears are that the extension of 126th Street will increase traffic and dumping in the area."*

"I wonder about the birds and fishermen, are they being poisoned? Such beautiful birds and such nasty smells."

They are impressed at the ability of natural flora and fauna to survive in spite of the extreme circumstances.

"I'm amazed that as badly as this area has been abused, it still harbors an amazing biodiversity."

But the impact of industrial features on people's experience is not always entirely negative. In some cases, human development actually attracts or provides habitat for wildlife species.

"A landfill to the north with lots of gulls and sometimes, hawks on its man-made slopes."

For some people, the industrial features of the region themselves can be a source of interest and fascination. They enjoy observing these features.

"Touring historic areas, industries and civil engineering wonders."

"I even like to see the smoke, steam, and occasional visible flames which are sometimes viewable at the steel plant."

"One of my earliest memories was standing by our back door and watching the trains go by - there were no houses between our house and the tracks to the west."

Some of the industrial modifications of the landscape have even been used as opportunities for recreation.

"We liked to splash around in the shallow water, including one time in the warmth of the cruddy outfall of process water from the Pullman plant."

"His Dad used to take them up to the top of the dump in the car. They'd park and wait awhile with the lights off, leaning against the car. When his Dad turned the lights on, they'd see rats running around. He'd shoot as many as he could. I still wish I would've had a .22 and would have been invited to go along."

Besides industry, the human-made features that appear most often in people's descriptions of special places include recreation facilities, nature centers, and paths for walking and hiking.

"Nice picnic areas for larger (or small) picnics or family reunions."

"The center has exhibits for adults and children to learn more about the flora and fauna of the area."

"I liked walking the trails and boardwalks of the marshy sections in summer."

Some people included adjacent residential neighborhoods and homes as part of the context for the special place they were describing.

"Drive down streets that change names as they go north through a residential district of manicured, tiny lawns in front of small, well-maintained homes."

"The neighborhood along one side is very poor, and kind of scary."

Human beings themselves are also a part of special places. The respondents often wrote about other people—especially friends, family, tour groups, visitors, and residents of the Calumet area—in connection with their special places.

"Remember fishing there with my father and grandfather and now there with my sons."

"I enjoyed 'shooting the breeze' with some old-timers fishing alongside of us."

"She was an elderly lady, known to us boys as 'Nan-Nan Johnson', who subsisted valiantly as a mini-rancher raising varieties of livestock on 'idle' land around her frame garage home."

Memories of the Past, Hopes for the Future

The respondents who grew up in the Calumet area related memorable events and experiences from their childhoods.

"Several of us teen-age boys, who lived in the Fernwood community, three or four miles northwest of the lake, would hike to it, to revel in this most 'wilderness' part of our increasingly developed flatlands region. Our main objective was usually to 'cook-out', boy scout style, perhaps baked potatoes, or even bacon and eggs."

"Where 130th Street crosses the Calumet Great Lakes ships were often tied up. As a hiker or biker on 130th Street they were most fascinating to this kid. On one occasion another scout and I were invited to come aboard. Wow, what a thrill! Long wood ladder from ground to the deck (over the rail). Going up wasn't bad (looking up) but coming down after a 'tour' of the ship was a bit worrisome. The view down was a bit scary."

"One day while out in the boat, I found and retrieved a wooden, floating, jointed, creek chub darter lure in the silver flash pattern. While my Dad was pulling stuff together to leave, I walked from the channel side of the club's peninsula to the lake side. I tied on the lure, very little light left, maybe the first cast, I had a shocking surface strike (my first ever). Heavy fish, much excitement. Net is back in the boat. Another jump and gone. I've preferred surface fishing ever since."

Some of them believe that these experiences have had a formative effect on their lives and character.

"This is the place where I got my appreciation and love for nature - however humble on the south side of Chicago."

"No doubt my childhood in the outdoors has led me to the roles of volunteer bird monitor ... and volunteer site steward ... ."

Over time, these people have seen many changes take place in the Lake Calumet region. They feel regret and sadness over the destruction and loss of natural areas.

"It means a memory tinged with regret for what is lost."

"Marshland south of 130th - gone for good under a mountain of trash."

"A sad compromise - the development of land/business and the destruction of natural habitat."

Even in cases where natural environments are not physically destroyed, people may be distressed by changes in the character of and access to their favorite sites.

"It's hard to explain but I'm truly sad that we are no longer allowed to visit this area, no stopping, no fishing, no parking signs everywhere."

"I hope this spot NEVER gets 'officially' developed. I enjoy using the tiny deer path down to it. It would lose a lot of its charm for me if the access was on a cleared, 4-foot cedar chip trail."

Recent efforts and proposals for restoring and improving the quality of natural and human environments cast the future of the Calumet area in a more positive light.

"I hope someday the old [steel mill] property (off S. Ave. O) just west of Wolf Lake can be cleaned up. With legislation it can be restored and made into a large greenery preserve. It could have parks, wildlife restoration areas and man-made wetland sections on this property."

"It's great to see the cooperation in building better rail connections into [the automobile manufacturing plant], and plans for reducing congestion, and the role of [commuter rail] connections in the life of Pullman and Roseland communities."

Looking ahead, people hope that the remaining natural places and habitats can be preserved and protected for the future.

"We cannot afford to lose any more of this fantastic habitat. It must be saved for folks in the future."

"I'm sure that even this area has its limits. It has to be preserved BEFORE these limits are reached."

"I hope that good planning will ensure that many generations will continue to enjoy these beautiful wilderness areas long after I'm gone. What a sin to lose them."

DISCUSSION

The Lake Calumet Special Places Survey is one of a series of similar studies that I have carried out to better understand how people experience and value natural environments. Taken together, these surveys reveal both commonalities and differences in the experiences described by various groups of people in different regions of the Midwest.

Some of the themes and values that emerged in the Lake Calumet study are quite similar to those I found in earlier surveys in northern Wisconsin and Michigan (Schroeder 1996), as well as at the Morton Arboretum in the Chicago area (Schroeder 1991). Qualities that the Lake Calumet special places have in common with special places identified in surveys from other locations include the beauty of the environment; feelings of serenity and peacefulness; contact with natural features and processes (including wildlife); solitude; and opportunities to escape or find refuge from the stresses of daily life and more built up surroundings.

In some cases, the descriptions of these characteristics of special places in the Lake Calumet survey were strikingly similar to the descriptions obtained in surveys of special places in the rural and mostly undeveloped northwoods of Wisconsin and Michigan. For example, compare the following description of a secluded place from the Lake Calumet survey with one from a similar survey of special places in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan:

LAKE CALUMET: "Although I passed by frequently, I never noticed a big swamp through the trees and down the hill until a friend showed me an obscure path down to it. Now, throughout the year, I sit immobile on a fallen tree and watch deer, muskrats and beavers. ... I never encounter another soul there, yet friends tell me they have visited. The people who go there treat the site with awe and respect. ... It's a tiny, private undiscovered place where I can go all by myself to chill out and get reconnected to that which is important in my life."

MICHIGAN UPPER PENINSULA: "A river with a unique eddy creating a hole for brook trout. A mile walk through wet cedar swamp and tag alder. Occasional sightings of raccoon, bear, deer, heron and hawks. ... No easy spot to find, but is visited 4 times per trout season on the average. A spot discovered alone but since have found others know of it and have fished it. Only

have encountered one other party there in 8 years. Complete privacy, solitude is relaxing."

Another common theme expressed in both the Lake Calumet and the northwoods surveys was the uniqueness and rarity of the special places and their contrast to other more common (and usually more developed) settings. People in both regions treasure their special places and feel concerned that future changes in the regional landscape may spoil these uniquely valuable settings. They hope that it will be possible to protect and preserve these places and the characteristics that make them special.

In both the Lake Calumet area and the more remote regions of the northwoods, there were several survey respondents who had grown up in the area and for whom childhood memories were an important aspect of their special places. The following two recollections of growing up in the Lake Calumet area and in the Black River area of northern Michigan suggest that, as recently as the 1930s, life in these two regions was not all that different.

> *LAKE CALUMET: "In the late 1930s, this consisted of some scattered woodlands and some squatter homesteads and a lot of pristine wetlands. ... [My schoolmates'] parents had a small cabin home in what was then the community of Parsons. Part of their sons' life style included running trap lines for muskrat, mink, etc., in the marshes in winter, and fishing and swimming in the lake and river in the summer."*

> *BLACK RIVER, MICHIGAN: "I remember the falls as I spent a lot of time along the River, fishing below the falls. At times we had some good rainbow fishing. Well in the fall of the year as you know, my father was caretaker of the park and at that time no people would be around and to pass the time I would trap for animals such as mink, muskrats, weasel, coyote."*

Lake Calumet today, of course, is not the northwoods. The differences between the Lake Calumet special place descriptions and the responses from special place surveys in other locations are, not surprisingly, mostly related to the level of urban and industrial development in the Lake Calumet region. Human development and its byproducts, such as landfills, pollution, and smells, were described much more often in the Lake Calumet surveys than in the surveys from other locations. The role of these features in people's experience of their special places was somewhat ambivalent, however. On the one hand, the urban matrix surrounding the special places often had a negative impact on people's experiences of nature. On the other hand, the perceived value of these natural places existing amidst industrial, commercial, and residential areas seemed to be highlighted by their contrast to the surrounding built-up landscape. Part of what makes these natural places special is simply that it is so remarkable for them to be found in such a heavily urbanized locale. Also, for some people, the industrial features seem to hold a measure of interest or fascination in their own right, perhaps lending an unusual or exotic character to the setting.

The respondents in the earlier special places surveys in the northwoods tended to feel that the present state of their region was highly desirable. They wanted to keep it the way it was, and were worried that future changes in the landscape would diminish the natural character of the whole region and of their special places. In the Lake Calumet survey, on the other hand, people had a less positive image of the general region surrounding their special places. Although they still feared that future development could further harm or destroy these remaining natural places, they were also able to look forward with some hope to future improvements through new restoration and protection measures being proposed and planned for the region.

CONCLUSIONS

At first glance, the heavily urbanized Lake Calumet area might seem an unlikely place to find significant biological species and habitats. But a closer look shows that the area does in fact hold many such resources. Similarly, at first it might seem unlikely that this area would support significant experiences of nature, solitude, beauty, and serenity. Yet this survey shows that such experiences are indeed enjoyed by residents of and visitors to the Lake Calumet area. Just as the Calumet area provides habitat for important biological species, it also provides settings for significant human experiences and values that contribute directly to the quality of life of people in this region. It is significant that in an area as populated and urbanized as Lake Calumet, people can still find places where they feel remote from civilization and close to wild nature.

The Lake Calumet Special Places Survey shows that there are highly valued dimensions of nature experience that are not confined to remote, undeveloped regions far from the city. People will seek and are able to find settings for beauty, serenity, and solitude even among the factories and landfills of a region such as Lake Calumet. The personal meanings and feelings that people hold for these places are a strong and lasting part of their lives. By learning about special places and what they mean to people, we may help to ensure that such places will always be available to provide these kinds of highly valued experiences.

LITERATURE CITED

Schroeder, H.W. 1991.
Preference and meaning of arboretum landscapes: combining quantitative and qualitative data. Journal of Environmental Psychology. 11: 231-248.

Schroeder, H.W. 1996.
Voices from Michigan's Black River: obtaining information on "special places" for natural resource planning. Gen. Tech. Rep. NC-184. St. Paul, MN: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, North Central Forest Experiment Station. 25 p.

Schroeder, H.W. 1998.
Research update: special places in the Chequamegon area. Unpubl. Rep. Evanston, IL: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, North Central Research Station. 18 p.

Schroeder, H.W. 2002.
Experiencing nature in special places: surveys in the North Central region. Journal of Forestry. 100(5): 8-14.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks go to Lynne Westphal, Suzanne Malec, Marian Byrnes, Mike Siola, Mark Bouman, Bowden Quinn, Walter Marcisz, Irene Flebbe, and Laurie Harvey for distributing announcements and surveys to potential participants; to Suzanne Malec, Christine Vogt, and Lynne Westphal for reviewing and commenting on drafts of this report; and to the survey participants for taking the time to share their experiences of the Lake Calumet area.

APPENDIX

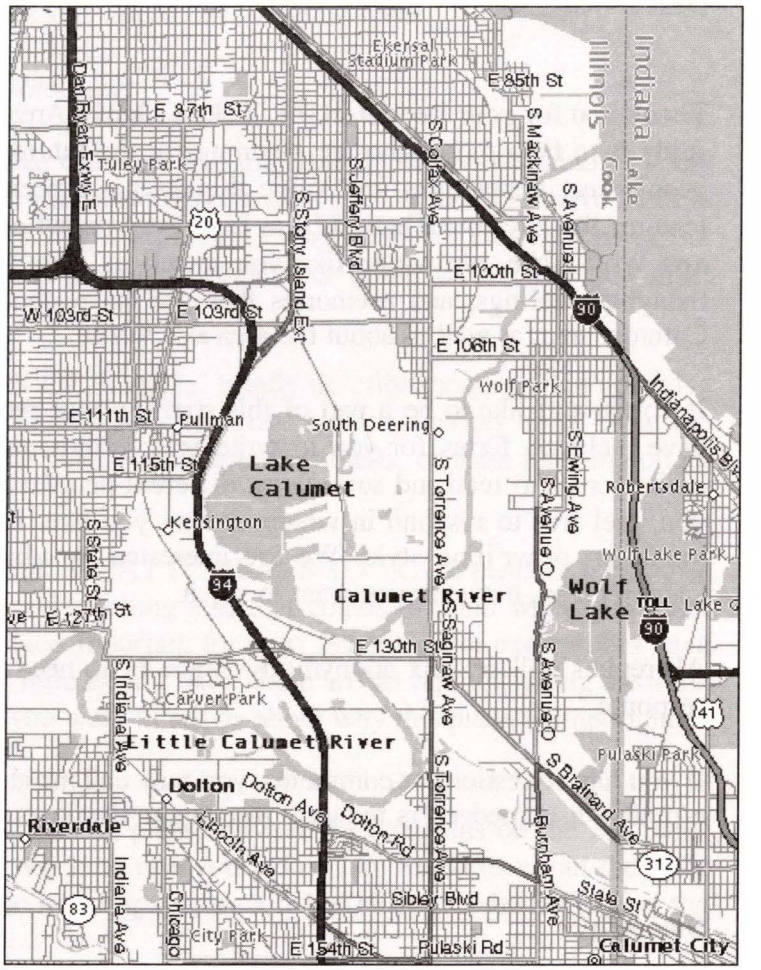
This appendix includes copies of the flier announcing the survey; the cover letter, instructions, and map that accompanied the survey; and the pages on which survey participants wrote their responses.

TELL US WHAT THE LAKE CALUMET AREA MEANS TO YOU . . .

The City of Chicago and the State of Illinois have recently announced a joint plan for revitalizing both the industry and the natural areas around Lake Calumet. To help in planning for the future of this area, the USDA Forest Service, North Central Research Station is inviting residents and visitors to participate in the **"Lake Calumet Area Special Places Study"**. The purpose of this study is to find out what people think and feel about the Calumet area -- especially the many outdoor places and natural features that are found here.

Whether you've lived your whole life here or have only visited once, **we'd like to hear from you!**

The general area covered by this study is shown in the map to the right. It includes the southeast side of Chicago as well as adjacent communities in Illinois and Indiana. This area contains a diverse mixture of industrial development, residential communities, and natural features such as lakes, wetlands, streams, prairies, and forests.



Participants in the study will be asked to describe memorable outdoor places that they have been to in the Calumet area, and to explain what these places mean to them. (All responses will be kept strictly anonymous.) A summary of the results will be made available to those involved in planning for the future of the Lake Calumet area.

To receive more information and find out how you can participate in this study, fill out the form below and mail it to:

Herbert W. Schroeder
USDA Forest Service
North Central Research Station
845 Chicago Ave., Suite 225
Evanston, IL 60202-2357

E-mail: hschroeder@fs.fed.us
Telephone: 847-866-9311 x.15

To be included in the study, we must hear from you by March 31, 2001.

- - - -

United States Department of Agriculture | **Forest Service** | **North Central Research Station** | **845 Chicago Ave., Suite 225 Evanston, IL 60202**

Dear :

Thank you for your interest in the "Lake Calumet Area Special Places Study". The purpose of this study is to help those who are planning for the future of the Lake Calumet area understand how people see, experience, and value this area – especially the many outdoor places and natural features that are found here. If you have ever visited or lived in the general area of Lake Calumet and Wolf Lake, we would like you to tell us what this area means to you. This includes any thoughts, feelings, and memories that you have about special outdoor places within the Lake Calumet area, as well as about the area as a whole.

If you would like to be a part of this study, please read the instructions on the enclosed pages. I have included forms for you to write your comments on. Your using these forms will make it easier for us to read and summarize different people's replies. But if these forms do not work for you, feel free to respond in whatever way you like. And please don't worry about your spelling, grammar, or writing style. We are interested in whatever you have to tell us about the Lake Calumet area, however you want to say it.

All replies will be kept anonymous. There is no need to include your name or address with your response.

If you have questions or comments, you may call me at 847-866-9311, extension 15, or send me an e-mail at hschroeder@fs.fed.us. Once again, thank you for your interest in this study.

Sincerely,

HERBERT W. SCHROEDER
Research Social Scientist

Enclosures

THE LAKE CALUMET AREA SPECIAL PLACES STUDY

>>> Please read these instructions carefully before you begin. <<<

On the attached pages, we would like you to tell us about one or more outdoor places in the Lake Calumet area that are special to you. For this study, "Lake Calumet area" means the southeast side of Chicago and nearby communities in Illinois and Indiana (see the map on the next page). You can describe one place or as many places as you would like. Please use a different page for each place you describe. I have included four pages -- use however many you need. You may add more pages of your own if there are more than four places you would like to tell us about.

For each place you describe, follow these three steps:

1. Think of an outdoor place in the Lake Calumet area that stands out in your mind as being important, memorable, or special to *you* personally. It might be a place you have been to many times, or a place you have seen only once. It is OK not to tell us exactly where your special place is -- you can choose a place you remember going to, even if you don't remember or don't want to say exactly where it is.

2. In the space labeled "DESCRIPTION OF PLACE," briefly describe the place that you have chosen. Don't just give the name of the place, but write a few sentences about what the place is like - for example, what the place looks, sounds, smells, or feels like; important things that are there, and so on.

3. On the same page, in the space labeled "WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU", please tell us about your thoughts, feelings, memories, and anything else that comes to mind when you think about this place. What makes this place important for you? What kind of experiences have you had there? Write as much or as little as you like. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in anything at all you want to tell us about why this place is important or special to you.

When you have finished writing about your places, please answer the questions on the last page, labeled "ABOUT YOURSELF". If there is anything else you would like to tell us about the Lake Calumet area or about yourself, please do so in the space labeled "OTHER COMMENTS" on the last page.

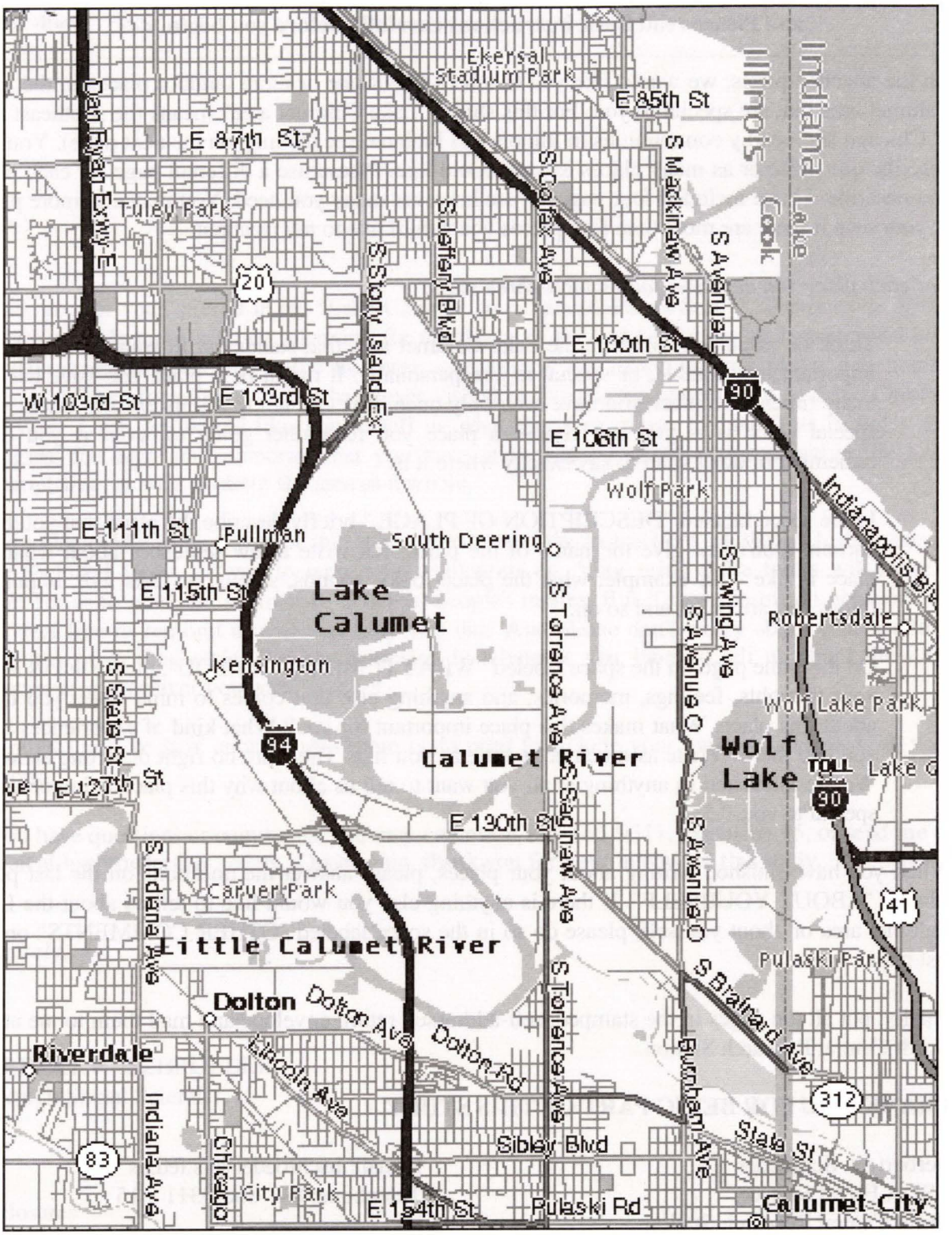
Finally, put all the pages in the stamped, self-addressed return envelope and mail them to me at the North Central Research Station.

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THIS STUDY.

Herbert W. Schroeder
USDA Forest Service
North Central Research Station
845 Chicago Ave., Suite 225
Evanston, IL 60202-2357

E-mail: hschroeder@fs.fed.us
Telephone: 847-866-9311 x.15

MAP OF THE LAKE CALUMET AREA



Map of the Calumet area

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU:

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU:

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU:

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU:

1. What is the zip code where you live? (If you have more than one home, please give the zip code for where you live most of the time.)

Zip Code: _____

2. If your main home is in the Lake Calumet area, how long have you lived in this area?

_____ years

3. If your main home is *not* in this area, do you visit the Lake Calumet area regularly?

_____ Yes _____ No

4. How old are you? _____

5. How old were you when you came to the Lake Calumet area for the first time? _____

6. What kinds of outdoor activities do you most enjoy doing in the Lake Calumet area?

7. Where did you find out about this study? _____

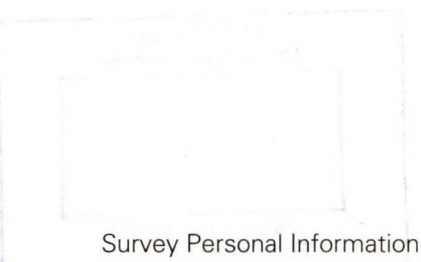
8. Do you belong to, or work for, any groups or organizations that are interested in or involved in planning for natural environments in the Lake Calumet area? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, which groups or organizations? _____
_____
_____
_____

9. Where have you lived most of your life? In a:

_____ big city _____ small city _____ suburb _____ small town _____ rural area

OTHER COMMENTS: (Use the back of this page if you need more room)



Survey Personal Information page

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

RMRS Library
USDA Forest Service

MAR 8 2005

240 W Prospect Rd
Fort Collins CO 80526

Printed on recyclable paper.

Schroeder, Herbert W.

2004. **Special places in the Lake Calumet area.** Gen. Tech. Rep. NC-249. St. Paul, MN: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, North Central Research Station. 23 p.

An open-ended, qualitative survey was conducted to identify special places in the Lake Calumet area of northeastern Illinois and northwestern Indiana, and to learn what kinds of experiences and environmental features make these places memorable and important to people.

KEY WORDS: Sense of place, place attachment, environmental planning, human dimensions

Mission Statement

We believe the good life has its roots in clean air, sparkling water, rich soil, healthy economies and a diverse living landscape. Maintaining the good life for generations to come begins with everyday choices about natural resources. The North Central Research Station provides the knowledge and the tools to help people make informed choices. That's how the science we do enhances the quality of people's lives.

For further information contact:

North Central Research Station
USDA Forest Service
1992 Folwell Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55108

Or visit our web site:

www.ncrs.fs.fed.us